



MEAL EXCHANGE



CAMPUS FOOD
SYSTEMS PROJECT

FOOD SERVICE OVERVIEW TOOLKIT

This toolkit provides you with the information and support to set up a first meeting with your food service provider, administration or chefs. It includes guiding questions for you to ask during this meeting to understand your campus food system, how it is organized and how you and your campus administrators and manager can work together.

The Campus Food Systems Project builds the student movement to get healthy, local sustainable food onto university campuses in Canada. The CFSP launched in October 2011 to work with campuses across the country. The project aims to help students improve the multi-stakeholder organizing, procurement practices, and research capacity of their institutions. By doing so, students have unlocked the potential for Universities to lead the healthy, local and sustainable food movement.

The resources used, best practices developed, and lessons learned from these campuses are shared on studentfood.ca to inspire and support change on campuses nationwide.

This project was developed by Sierra Youth Coalition and Meal Exchange, two national organizations with over 20 years of experience bringing students, faculty and administration together on university campuses to deliver social justice and environmental programs. The partnership of our organizations on this initiative was supported by three years of funding from the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation.

For questions or further support, contact national@studentfood.ca

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Introduction and goals

This toolkit will help you to understand your campus food system and how you can help to make it better. It's a tool for you to make sure that you and the people running your dining halls are on the same page before you start making food systems changes together.

What's in this toolkit

- support to help you set-up the first meeting with your campus food service team
- background resources and advice to help you come into the meeting with the knowledge and insight to have a meaningful discussion
- questions to help guide the discussion
- ideas on how this discussion ties into the bigger picture of food service change on campus

Setting Up the Meeting

If you don't know your Director of Food Services, their name and information will likely be on your Campus Food Service Website. Reach out to them and explain why you'd like to meet them ...

Dear {Insert Name},

My name is {Name} and I am currently a Campus Food Strategy Group Coordinator. I am working with {#} students who are passionate and keen to create a more just and sustainable food systems on campus. We see {University name/Food Service Provider} Food Services as a key collaborator in this work. It would be great to sit down and learn a more about your operations and goals to see how we can best work together. Please let me know a convenient time to meet.

I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Many thanks,

{Your Name}



Meeting Preparation

Do some background research. Read up on your food services and universities goals. What is their goal for food services? Who is the food service provider? Take some time looking online and walking around campus to understand what the food service team will be discussing.

Here are some other resources

National Food Service
Provider Sustainability
Standards

Campus Food Services
Sustainability Standards

General Resources

[Sodexo](#)
[Chartwells](#)
[Aramark](#)

[UBC's Sustainable Campus
Food Guide](#)
[McGill Food Systems
Project Farm to Plate report](#)

[McGill's Food is Important
video](#)
[Perceived Barriers to Local
Purchasing](#)

The 1st Meeting

This (60-90 minute) meeting is about starting conversations, building relationships, finding common ground, and identifying barriers and opportunities to work on together. Our suggestions for this process are intended as a reference and guide, but we're confident you'll know (or figure out!) what makes the most sense for your campus and contacts. Remember this toolkit will help with the first meeting and the fundamentals. In-depth discussion on topics like specific purchasing changes, kitchen labour and infrastructure, and contract and policy processes can (and will!) all happen as your projects progress.



Suggestion:

Have this meeting in the dining hall, see where the FSP is working and what you're talking about!



Questions to discuss with your Food Service Provider

All of these questions are meant as a resource to guide your discussion. Feel free to add / change questions as you wish. If you already know the answers, that's great. If you think of different questions, that's great too!

The main goal is to get out the content that's useful, however it comes out easiest. Ideally, this won't feel like doing a survey with an informant, but like having a friendly discussion with a colleague.

Feel free to print this out (on recycled paper), or jot this down. Bring a pen and a notebook, rather than a computer so you can dig into some real discussions!

Demographic questions

1 . Who runs university food services?

- Self-operated by the university
- Contract-managed (please select contract company below)
- Aramark
- Sodexo
- Compass Canada (Chartwells, Eurest)
- Other _____

2. How many individual meals are served daily in locations operated by food services?

What payment plan does food services use?

- All you care to eat (Board Plan)
- A La Carte Plan
- Mixed Plan
- Other plan type _____

3. Who is the Food Service Provider's client?

- The University (if so- which department?)
- The Students Union
- Other _____

4. What sort of contract does the Food Service Provider have with their client?

There are lots of options for the type of contract (a few are listed below). This is an opportunity to understand how the relationship between the FSP and the client works. As well this is a great time to discuss how long the FSP has been at the University and how long the contract is for. (This can help in the co-developing of plans).

- Fee for Service (Operate on behalf of the University)
- Cost Plus (Profits go to University)
- Profit and Loss Arrangement (FSP is entirely responsible for operation)
- Profit Split Agreement
- Management
- Other _____

Past and future plans

1 .How would you describe food services on campus?

2. What are some of the highlights of food services on campus?

3. Have you made recent changes or improvements that you're proud of?

4. What goals do they have for the future? Are you hoping to expand operations, increase efficiency, become more sustainable? What obstacles do you see, what opportunities do you see? How could students and stakeholders on campus support more sustainable food change on campus?



Purchasing

1. Where do university food services currently purchase from?

- Broker(s)
- Farmer-managed cooperative(s)
- General distributor(s) (e.g. Sysco, Gordon Food Services)
- Category-specific distributor(s) (e.g. produce distributor, seafood distributor)
- Individual farmer(s)
- Farmers market(s)
- Campus/student farm or garden

2. Would they be interested in purchasing from any of the above that they are not already purchasing?

3. Where are purchasing decisions made? By chefs in each dining hall, or by an executive chef for the whole campus. How much freedom is there in purchasing? Is there a strict approved suppliers list?

4. Are there any specialty outlets (ex. student café, organic retail store, etc.) or franchised outlets that have separate purchasing processes?

Local and sustainable purchasing

1. What is food services already purchasing that is local? When the major crops that are grown locally are in season, are they the ones being purchased? Are there products that food services is purchasing now that are sustainably-produced? (e.g. organic, cage-free/confinement-free/pasture-raised, hormone/antibiotic-free, fair-trade)

2. What do university food services see as the most significant benefits from local and sustainable purchasing?

- Higher quality food
- Lower environmental impacts
- Meeting desire and demand from customers
- Opportunity for student education/research
- Good for school and/or company public relations
- Supporting local farmers, community and/or economy
- Other _____

3. What do university food services see as the most significant priorities inside the university to increasing local and sustainable purchasing?

- Getting student support (e.g. prove student desire for local/sustainable food, or prove students' willingness to pay more for local/sustainable food)
- Getting farmers approved through food service company
- Getting administrative support from the university
- Developing standards / guidelines for purchasers (e.g. how to define local and sustainable products)
- Developing tracking system for purchasers
- Additional training for kitchen staff or adding more kitchen staff
- Purchasing additional kitchen equipment / developing additional kitchen facilities
- Offsetting the extra costs from purchasing or preparing local and sustainable food
- Finding examples of approaches used by other universities
- Other _____

4. What do university food services see as the most significant priorities outside the university to increasing local and sustainable purchasing?

- Finding growers/local product supply
- Finding sufficient product quantity
- Finding local processing facilities and/or processors
- Coordinating purchase/delivery of products
- Meeting insurance needs
- Other _____



Student engagement

1. How does the food service provider gather feedback from students? (e.g. online comments, whiteboards in cafeterias, comment submission box, regular student surveys, a food advisory committee).
2. Are you planning any events or activities to enhance students engagement?
3. Are you currently working with student groups on campus?
4. Has local and sustainable food been identified as a priority by students? If not, what method for demonstrating this support would be most useful to the foodservice provider? (e.g. would a student poll or petition work, or would they prefer a professional survey with statistical analysis?)

Applied Student Research

1. Have you worked with professors and students before on using class research to answer some of the challenges food services face?
2. If not, would you be interested in thinking through questions you have that could be answered by student researchers? **(as you'll read in the CFSP Applied Student Research Toolkit- there are lot of opportunities for ASR projects!)*

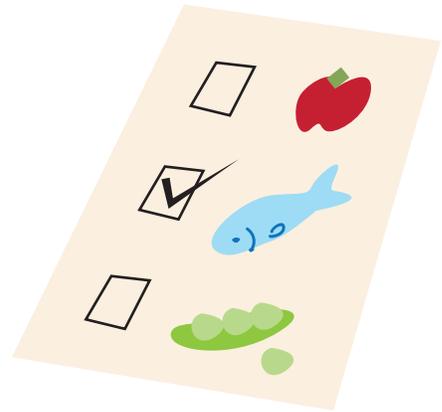
Thank those you met with for a (hopefully) great meeting! We encourage you to think how you can continue the relationship with the Food Service Provider, be it through your multi-stakeholder meetings, local food day events or Applied Student Research.



What's Next?

The Food Service Overview is a great place to ensure that you and your Food Service Provider are on the same page. The challenges and opportunities to local and sustainable purchasing that come up during your discussions will help to inform the priorities you set with your stakeholders and the projects you start setting up and working on in future semesters.

Purchasing Baseline: The discussions you have now with your foodservice providers should give you a good sense of how food gets to your campus, who is involved in making those decisions, and what some of their major considerations are when making these decisions. However, you probably won't have a chance to get into the specifics of exactly what food the campus is ordering, the different distributors it's coming from, and opportunities for specific purchasing changes. Doing a **Purchasing Baseline** will be useful to gather this information. It will provide a clear picture of what's actually being purchased and will let you measure improvements.



Turning academics to action: Talking over the basics of how food services operate will provide the groundwork for setting up student research projects with your foodservices in the future. There are lots of specific suggestions about how to connect food services and student coursework in the **Applied Student Research Toolkit**, but take note of any ideas or opportunities that come up during this preliminary work!

Conclusion

The Food Service Overview toolkit is just the beginning of an exciting food movement on campus. Now that you know what your food systems look like, and who the team that can support some of your food systems goals, you'll be able to make significant change. If you are looking for more inspiration, visit studentfood.ca to see what other campuses across the country are doing and share your stories to national@studentfood.ca in the good food movement!